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Death Deals A Hand



THEY PLAYED A DEADLY AND THRILLING GAME WITH THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE STAKES—THEIR OWN LIVES! FOR DEATH WAITED ON THE FALL OF EVERY CARD AND THE SCREAMING, AGONIZING SUSPENSE GREW AND GREW FOR THE LIFE-JADED MEMBERS OF THE DOOM CLUB...

DENNIS MANNING, JADED AND BLASE, PUTS A STRANGE AD IN A NEWSPAPER...

NOW REMEMBER, THIS MUST BE PRINTED EXACTLY AS I'VE WRITTEN IT! EXACTLY!

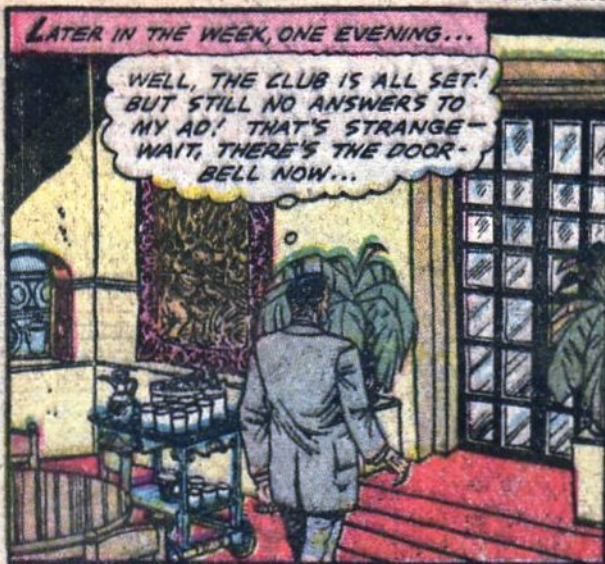
OF COURSE, SIR!

HMMM—THIS IS A STRANGE AD! NO WONDER HE WAS SO PARTICULAR ABOUT IT!

ATTENTION:
ALL YOU WHO ARE
BORED AND TIRED OF
LIFE! I CAN SHOW
YOU A NEW THRILL!
APPLY TO DENNIS
MANNING—THE DOOM
CLUB—15 SOUTH PLACE.

LATER IN THE WEEK, ONE EVENING...

WELL, THE CLUB IS ALL SET!
BUT STILL NO ANSWERS TO
MY AD! THAT'S STRANGE—
WAIT, THERE'S THE DOOR-
BELL NOW...



GOOD EVENING!
YOU CAME IN
ANSWER TO THE
AD IN THE
PAPER?

OF COURSE!
THIS IS — IS
THE DOOM
CLUB?



IT IS! YOU
WANT TO
JOIN, I
PRESUME?

THE NAME SOUNDS VERY
INTRIGUING! AND I AM
DREADFULLY BORED THESE
DAYS! BUT I'D HAVE TO
KNOW MORE ABOUT IT
FIRST!



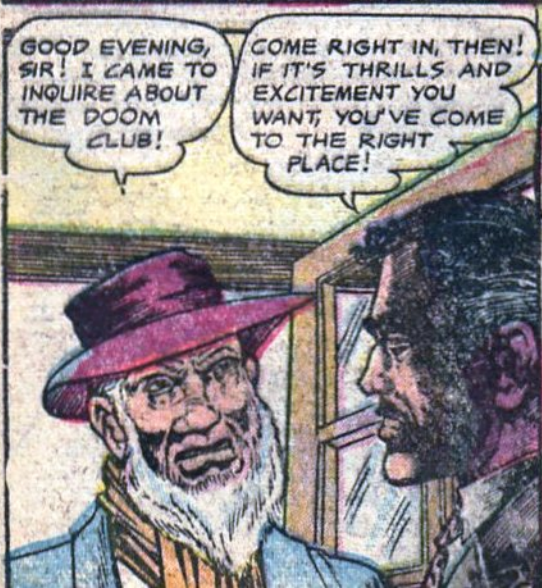
OH, THERE'S
YOUR DOOR-
BELL AGAIN!

ANOTHER APPLICANT, NO
DOUBT! WAIT A MOMENT,
MY DEAR, AND I'LL
EXPLAIN EVERYTHING!



GOOD EVENING,
SIR! I CAME TO
INQUIRE ABOUT
THE DOOM
CLUB!

COME RIGHT IN, THEN!
IF IT'S THRILLS AND
EXCITEMENT YOU
WANT, YOU'VE COME
TO THE RIGHT
PLACE!



THE DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN AND AGAIN!
FINALLY...

COME IN, SIR!
THEN I'LL CLOSE
AND LOCK THE
DOOR! THERE
ARE ENOUGH
OF US NOW!

THIS IS THE DOOM CLUB?AY
YOU SEE, I AM BADLY CRIPPLED
AND ANYTHING THAT CAN
BRIGHTEN MY LIFE—ANY-
THING AT ALL, WILL BE
GREATLY APPRECIATED!

PLEASE—
CAN'T
WE GET
STARTED?



AND AT LAST DENNIS MANNING EXPLAINS THE RULES OF THE GRIM CLUB...

NOW LISTEN CAREFULLY! YOU HAVE JOINED THE DOOM CLUB AND YOU MUST ABIDE BY THE RULES! THE OBJECT OF ALL THIS, THE EXCITEMENT, IS THAT ONE OF US MUST DIE AT EACH MEETING!

WHY? THAT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS! FOR THE THRILL, THE SUSPENSE, OF COURSE! WE'RE ALL JADED! AND EACH ONE OF US MUST ALSO SIGN OVER ALL PROPERTY TO THE CLUB!

WE PLAY THIS WAY: THE CARDS ARE DEALT, AND THE ONE WHO GETS THE ACE OF SPADES DIES! HE MUST BE KILLED BY THE PERSON WHO GETS THE ACE OF CLUBS! THEN THE GAME STARTS OVER AGAIN!

B-BUT HOW? WHY?

D-DIE!



THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE SURVIVOR, YOU SEE! AND HE, OR SHE, THEN GETS ALL THE PROPERTY AND WEALTH! SOUND EXCITING ENOUGH FOR ALL OF YOU?

OH— TOO EXCITING!

I, ER, I'D LIKE TIME TO THINK IT OVER!

SURE! TAKE ALL THE TIME YOU WANT!

I—I DON'T LIKE IT! I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE!

LOST YOUR NERVE? YOU WANTED EXCITEMENT, DIDN'T YOU?



FINALLY, ONLY TWO DECIDE TO LEAVE...

GOODBYE! REMEMBER YOUR OATH OF SECRECY! IF YOU VIOLATE IT, YOU DIE ANYWAY!

YES— YES! I WON'T TELL A SOUL!

OR ME! JUST LET ME OUT OF HERE! FAST!

AND NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE REAL GAME BEGINS! TONIGHT ONE OF US DIES— DEPENDS ON HOW THE CARDS FALL! AND REMEMBER—THERE CAN BE NO WELSHING, NO TURNING BACK! HERE WE GO!





I WILL DEAL THE FIRST HAND! NOW — WATCH YOUR CARDS CLOSELY! ONE OF US WILL SOON GET — THE DEATH CARD!



THE FIRST TIME AROUND...

NO LOSERS THAT ROUND! BUT THIS TIME THE ACES WILL SURELY FALL!



STEADILY THE TENSION GROWS...

OH — I — I DIDN'T GET EITHER OF THE ACES! B — BUT THE CARDS ARE ALMOST GONE!



I CAN HARDLY BRING MYSELF TO LOOK! BUT I MUST — AND SOONER OR LATER THERE WILL BE ONE OF THE BLACK ACES!



THEN...

YIIIIII — THE ACE OF SPADES! BUT NO, IT CAN'T...

THE DEATH CARD FALLS...

WHEW — W — WHAT A RELIEF! Y — YOU GOT IT!

YES — YOU ARE THE FIRST TO LOSE!

NO — NO! PLEASE! I DIDN'T MEAN IT! IT WAS ONLY A GAME!



ALL THE GAME GOES ON...



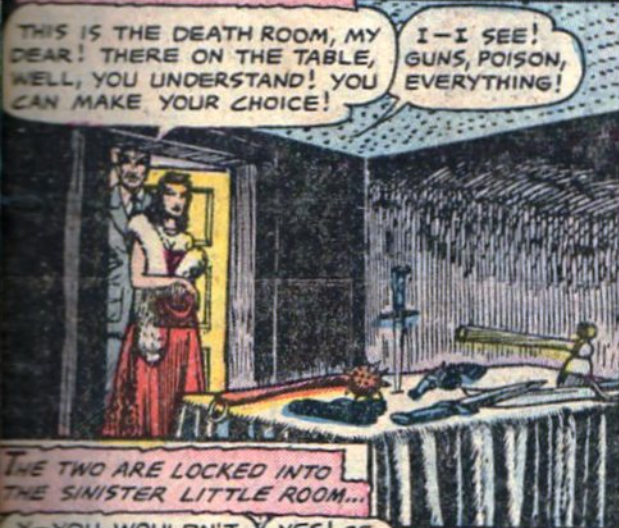
THERE ARE ONLY A FEW CARDS LEFT! THE ACE OF CLUBS WILL BE UP SOON—AND THE PERSON WHO GETS IT...

MUST KILL ME!



I'VE GOT THE ACE OF CLUBS!

A FEW MINUTES LATER...



THIS IS THE DEATH ROOM, MY DEAR! THERE ON THE TABLE, WELL, YOU UNDERSTAND! YOU CAN MAKE YOUR CHOICE!

I—I SEE! GUNS, POISON, EVERYTHING!

THE VICTIM, SCREAMING MADLY, IS FORCED INTO THE DEATH ROOM...

COME ON NOW! YOU AGREED TO THIS! NO WELSHING!

NO—NO! LET ME GO! I DIDN'T REALIZE—PLEASE!

COWARD! GO ON—SHOVE HIM IN!



THE TWO ARE LOCKED INTO THE SINISTER LITTLE ROOM...



Y—YOU WOULDN'T REALLY DO IT, MY DEAR? PLEASE! IT WAS ONLY A JOKE, WASN'T IT?

YES! OF COURSE! A JOKE! HAH—HAH!

BUT THE JOKE WAS ON YOU, MISTER! YOU LOST—AND NOW YOU PAY!

NO—YAAAAAA—

YOUR PROPERTY WILL BE APPRECIATED—BY THE SURVIVOR!



THE NEXT NIGHT THE CLUB CONVENES ONCE MORE...

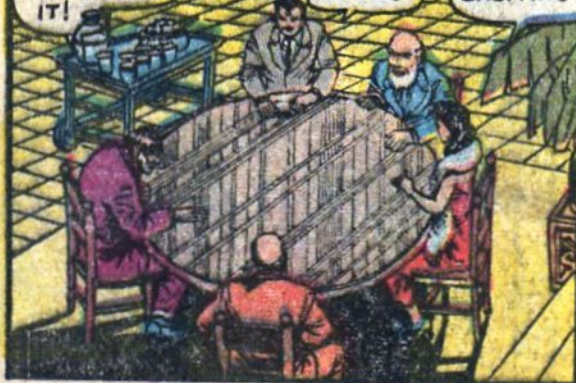
BUT...

WAIT A MINUTE, MANNING! WHY SHOULD YOU DEAL AGAIN TONIGHT? YOU DEALT THE LAST TIME! HOW DO WE KNOW THIS IS ON THE SQUARE?

WELL, MY FRIENDS, HERE WE ARE AGAIN! ALL READY TO STAKE OUR LIVES AND FORTUNES ON THE TURN OF A CARD!

THIS SUSPENSE—AWFUL! BUT SO EXCITING!

YES—YES! GET ON WITH IT!



A GOOD QUESTION! FAIR ENOUGH! HERE—YOU DEAL THE CARDS!

THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!



HURRY—HURRY, WILL YOU! I CAN'T STAND THIS!

HERE THEY COME! AT LEAST NOW WE KNOW EVERYTHING IS ON THE LEVEL!



BUT THE VERY FIRST TIME AROUND...

YOWWWW—I DEALT MYSELF THE ACE OF SPADES!



AND DENNIS MANNING GETS THE OTHER DEADLY CARD...

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD HAVE LET ME DEAL AFTER ALL! SEE—I HAVE THE HONOR OF KILLING YOU!



SO INTO THE DEATH ROOM...

YOU ARE NOT AFRAID LIKE THE OTHERS, MY FRIEND?

I'M AFRAID, ALL RIGHT! BUT I'M NOT YELLOW! I LOST— SO I'LL PAY!

GO AHEAD! GET IT OVER WITH!

I DO NOT LIKE YOU! YOU ALMOST MADE TROUBLE FOR ME TONIGHT! SO, FOR THAT, I WANT TO TELL YOU SOMETHING THAT WILL HURT!

FASTER THAN THE EYE CAN FOLLOW, DENNIS MANNING PRODUCES A DECK OF CARDS...

HUH? Y—YOU'RE A CARD SHARP! A PROFESSIONAL! YOU CAN DO ANYTHING WITH CARDS!

EXACTLY! NOW YOU KNOW THE SECRET! I CANNOT POSSIBLY LOSE AT THIS LITTLE GAME!

YOU SEE! THE DEATH CARD— OUT OF THIN AIR! I CAN GIVE IT TO ANYONE I WANT— OR CONCEAL IT IF I DON'T WANT IT! BUT I WANTED TO KILL YOU! YOU'RE A MENACE!

I INTEND TO MAKE A FORTUNE OUT OF THIS GAME AND THE FOOLS LOOKING FOR EXCITEMENT! I CAN TAKE NO CHANCES! SO NOW— IT IS YOUR TURN!

HAH! TRYING TO GET AWAY! GOING TO TELL THE OTHERS, NO DOUBT!

YES— WE'LL GET YOU! ALL OF US WILL TEAR YOU TO BITS!

AND I FORGOT TO LOCK THE DOOR! CARELESS OF ME— BUT NO MATTER!

EEEEAAAAAA—

AND SO THE DEADLY GAME GOES ON, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT...

WELL, MY FRIENDS, ONLY FOUR OF US LEFT NOW! THE GAME CANNOT GO ON MUCH LONGER!

COME ON—DEAL!

YOU'VE BEEN LUCKY ENOUGH SO FAR!

UNTIL...

SORRY, OLD TIMER, BUT YOU LOST! GOODBYE!

YAAAAAAA—

AND THE FOLLOWING NIGHT...

ONLY MYSELF AND MANNING LEFT NOW!

AHHHHHHHH—

FINALLY...

JUST YOU AND I, MR. MANNING! OUR LITTLE GAME MUST END—TONIGHT!

YES! AND SINCE YOU'RE A LADY, YOU CAN DEAL! NO ONE CAN SAY I'M NOT A GENTLEMAN!

HUH! THE—THE ACE OF SPADES! B—BUT THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE—IT CAN'T...

WHY NOT, MR. MANNING? BECAUSE YOU'RE A PROFESSIONAL CARD SHARP? WATCH THIS, PLEASE!

SEE! OUT OF THE AIR! IT HAPPENS THAT I'M SOMETHING OF AN EXPERT MYSELF! I'VE KNOWN ALL ALONG THAT YOU WERE CHEATING! NOW WE'LL TALK A LITTLE BUSINESS, I THINK! WE'LL SPLIT THE...

QUICK AS A CAT...

YOU LITTLE WIXEN! I'LL FIX YOU GOOD! I'M NOT SHARING WITH ANYBODY!

BACK! I'LL USE THIS GUN!

BUT SHE MISSES HER FIRST SHOT AND...

AHHHHH—
N-NO!
D-DON'T!
GAAAAA—

HAH-HAH! GOODBYE, MY DEAR! I HOPE YOU LIKE IT WHERE YOU'RE GOING!

BUT THE NEXT NIGHT, AS DENNIS MANNING ENTERS HIS HOME, HE GETS A TERRIBLE SHOCK...

GAAAA— Y-YOU! ALL OF YOU! B-BUT YOU'RE DEAD!

YES! DEAD! HAH-HAH!

BUT WE'VE COME FOR YOU, DENNIS MANNING! COME BACK FROM THE GRAVE!

AND ANOTHER GAME IS PLAYED...

W-WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? THOSE CARDS?

HAH-HAH! OBVIOUS, ISN'T IT? WE'RE GOING TO HAVE ONE MORE GAME! AND THIS TIME YOU LOSE!

FOR THE LAST TIME...

YAAAAA— THE ACE OF SPADES! NO, PLEASE! YOU C-CAN'T...

A PASSING PROWL CAR HEARS THE SCREAMS FROM THE HOUSE...

SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE BEING MURDERED IN THERE!

EEYYYYYYYYY—

FUNNY! HE'S DEAD, WITH THAT CARD IN HIS HAND! AND NO SIGN OF ANYONE!

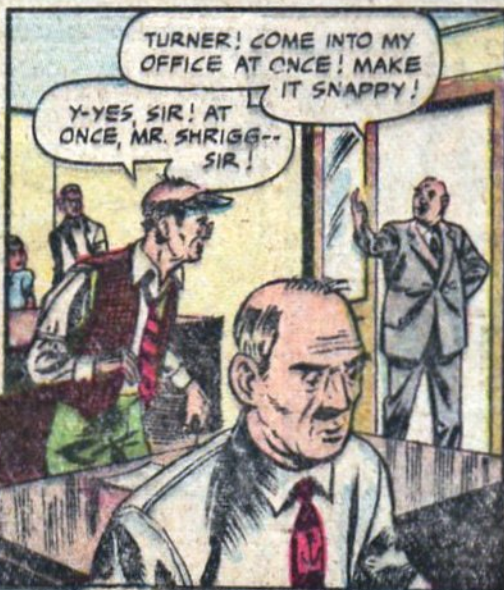
THE END

HEART *of the* CORPSE

AN OLD TYRANT WAS JASPER SHRIGG AND HE FEARED NOTHING BUT--DEATH! AND FOR A LONG TIME, THOUGH EVERYONE HATED HIM, NOBODY DARED TO KILL HIM! THEN ONE NIGHT, BLACK AND BLEAK, WHEN THE AIR WREAKED WITH MURDER--THE TERROR STRUCK! AND WHEN IT WAS OVER THE CORPSE YIELDED UP ITS DREADFUL SECRET...



BOB TURNER, A MILD AND NERVOUS MAN, CRINGES AS HIS BOSS, JASPER SHRIGG, BELLOWES AT HIM...



TURNER! COME INTO MY OFFICE AT ONCE! MAKE IT SNAPPY!

Y-YES, SIR! AT ONCE, MR. SHRIGG-- SIR!

YOU HEAR THAT? I'LL BET POOR OLD TURNER IS GETTING THE AXE!

HOW AWFUL! AND HE'S GOT A SICK WIFE, TOO!





"YES, MR. SHRIGG! YOU--YOU WANTED ME, SIR?"

OF COURSE I WANTED YOU, YOU POOR SNIVELING FOOL! YOUR BOOKS ARE ALL MIXED UP AGAIN!



THIS IS THE SECOND TIME THIS MONTH IT'S HAPPENED! I WON'T STAND FOR IT! YOU'RE FIRED! GET OUT!



NO USE PLEADING, YOU SCOT-LICKER! YOU WEAK-SPINED, NERVELESS SNAKE! GET OUT! YOU'RE FIRED! OUT!

P-PLEASE, SIR! I-- I HAVEN'T ANY MONEY SAVED! MY WIFE-- SO ILL! SHE'LL DIE UNLESS I HAVE MONEY FOR MEDICINE, FOR A NURSE!



BUT FINALLY THE UNLUCKY TURNER REALIZES THAT IT IS NO USE...

ALL RIGHT, MR. SHRIGG! I'LL GO! BUT YOU-- SOMEDAY YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS! YOU'RE NOT HUMAN! YOU'VE GOT A HEART OF STONE!

BAH! GET OUT! I HATE ALL YOU SNIVELING, WHINING LITTLE CLERKS! I'M A BETTER MAN THAN ALL OF YOU PUT TOGETHER!

THAT NIGHT AS BOB TURNER RETURNS TO HIS SHABBY LITTLE FLAT AND HIS SICK WIFE...



RENE IS ASLEEP! GOOD! SHE'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING WHEN I-- TURN ON THE GAS!

HOME Sweet HOME

AS THE SINISTER HISS OF THE GAS JETS IS HEARD IN THE APARTMENT...



BOB? ARE YOU THERE, BOB? OH-- I FEEL SO GOOD! SO PEACEFUL AND RELAXED! SO-- AWFULLY-- DROWSY...

NEXT MORNING AS JASPER SHRIGG IS DRIVEN TO WORK...

HMPH! SEE WHERE THAT FOOL I FIRED YESTERDAY KILLED HIMSELF AND HIS WIFE! GAS! HAH! I KNEW HE WAS A WEAKLING!

BLAST YOU AND YOUR ROCK OF A HEART, YOU OLD BUZZARD! I'D LIKE TO BREAK YOUR FAT NECK!

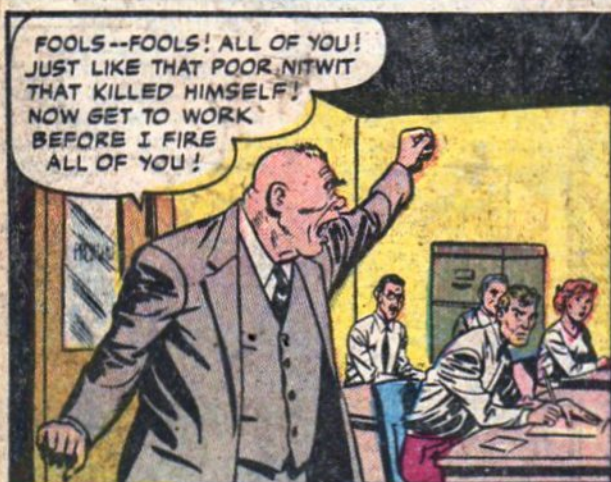


WHEN SHRIGG REACHES HIS OFFICE HE FINDS A COLD RECEPTION...

HMM--LOOK AT THE FOOLS! STARING AT ME AS IF I WERE A MURDERER! I CAN SEE THE HATE IN THEIR EYES!



FOOLS--FOOLS! ALL OF YOU! JUST LIKE THAT POOR NITWIT THAT KILLED HIMSELF! NOW GET TO WORK BEFORE I FIRE ALL OF YOU!



AND INTO THE MIND OF DICK DODGE COMES A RESOLVE...

SOMETHING HAS GOT TO BE DONE ABOUT THAT MAN! I--I NEVER KNEW I COULD HATE SO MUCH!



THAT NIGHT...

GOOD! A DARK STREET AND NOBODY AROUND! NOW I'LL MAKE SHORT WORK OF OLD SHRIGG!



HAH! THERE HE IS NOW! NO SERVANTS AROUND, EITHER! HEH-HEH--HE SEES ME! LOOK AT THE FEAR IN HIS FACE!



YOU'LL NEVER FIRE ANOTHER MAN, SHRIGG! THIS KNIFE...

YOWWWWW!



BUT DODGE IS SOON CAUGHT AND CONVICTED--
AND...



OKAY FELLA!
THIS IS IT!
THE GAS
CHAMBER!

I--I HATE TO DIE,
BUT I'M NOT SORRY
I KILLED SHRIGG!
HE WASN'T HUMAN!
HE HAD A
HEART OF
STONE!

YEAH,
SURE! A
HEART
LIKE A
ROCK! NOW
COME ON!

AND IN THE OFFICE OF OLD SHRIGG THERE IS
GENERAL REJOICING...



OH, IT'S HORRIBLE!
B-BUT I DON'T
BLAME HIM!

NO, HE
GAVE OLD
SHRIGG JUST
WHAT HE
HAD COMING!

STILL--
MURDER
IS NEVER
JUSTIFIED!

SO JASPER SHRIGG AND BOB TURNER ARE BURIED
--IN THE SAME CEMETERY! ONE NIGHT SEVERAL
WEEKS LATER...



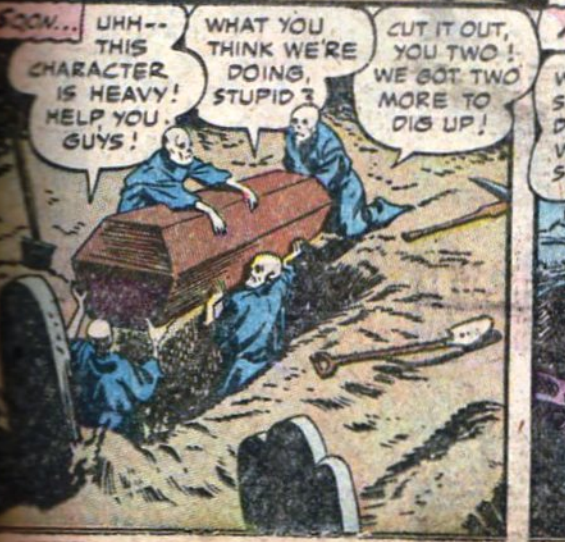
A GOOD RAINY
NIGHT FOR
OUR JOB!

YEAH, BUT
CUT THE
TALKING!
LET'S WORK!



HERE! THIS
ONE IS GOOD
AS ANY! SEE
THE DATE!

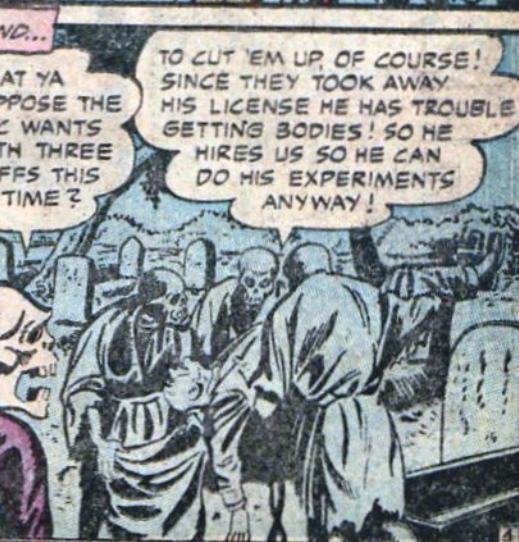
RIGHT! THE DOC
DON'T LIKE HIS
CORPSES
TOO OLD!



SOON... UHH--
THIS
CHARACTER
IS HEAVY!
HELP YOU
GUYS!

WHAT YOU
THINK WE'RE
DOING,
STUPID?

CUT IT OUT,
YOU TWO!
WE GOT TWO
MORE TO
DIG UP!



AND... WHAT YA
SUPPOSE THE
DOC WANTS
WITH THREE
STIFFS THIS
TIME?

TO CUT 'EM UP, OF COURSE!
SINCE THEY TOOK AWAY
HIS LICENSE HE HAS TROUBLE
GETTING BODIES! SO HE
HIRES US SO HE CAN
DO HIS EXPERIMENTS
ANYWAY!

LATER THE SAME NIGHT AT A DESOLATE HOUSE FAR OUT IN LONELY COUNTRY...

C'MON, DOC, OPEN UP! WE AIN'T GOT ALL NIGHT!

HEH-HEH! COME AND GET YOUR STIFFS, DOC!

WHEW--SURE FEELS GOOD TO GET OUT OF THIS MASK!



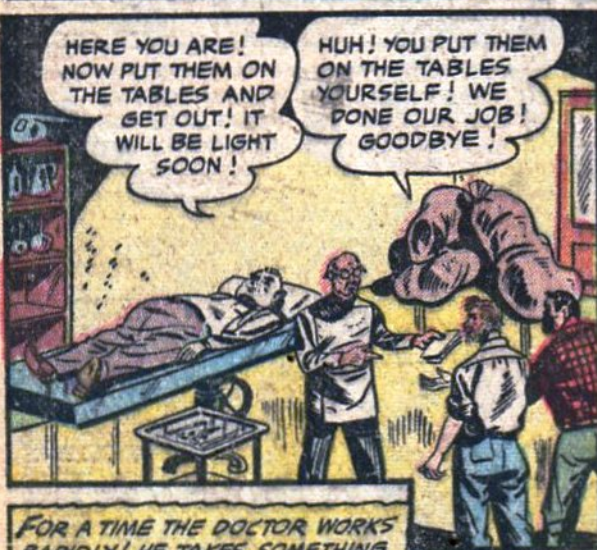
OH, IT'S YOU, RANSON! DID YOU GET-- THEM?

SURE, DOC! THREE OF THE FINEST! YOU GOT OUR DOUGH READY?



HERE YOU ARE! NOW PUT THEM ON THE TABLES AND GET OUT! IT WILL BE LIGHT SOON!

HUH! YOU PUT THEM ON THE TABLES YOURSELF! WE DONE OUR JOB! GOODBYE!



A LITTLE LATER AS THE DOCTOR MAKES HIS FIRST CAREFUL INCISION...

HAH! THE BODY OF JASPER SHRIGG! WHAT A HAPPY COINCIDENCE THIS IS! THE OLD TYRANT CHEATED ME ONCE!

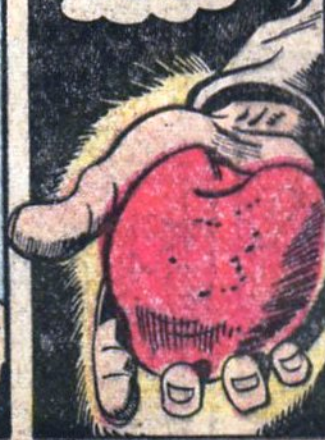


FOR A TIME THE DOCTOR WORKS RAPIDLY! HE TAKES SOMETHING FROM THE CHEST CAVITY--THEN A COLD CHILL MOVES OVER HIM...

HIS HEART! REMARKABLE--B-BUT WAIT A MINUTE...



PETRIFIED! YOWWWW--IT R-REALLY IS A STONE!



BEHIND HIM COMES A HORRIBLE STIRRING...

GIVE ME MY HEART, YOU FOOL! I WANT MY HEART!





OW--DONT!
OWWWW!

I WANT MY HEART!
AND I'LL TEAR
YOURS OUT!
HAH-HAH-HAH!



YOU'RE C-CHOKING
ME--
GUUUUU!

FOOL! BUNGLER!
EVEN WHEN I'M DEAD
I HAVE TO PUT UP
WITH FOOLS! CUT OUT
MY HEART, WILL
YOU!



HEH-HEH! HE'S DEAD! NOW
I'LL PUT MY STONY OLD HEART
BACK WHERE IT BELONGS
AND GO BACK TO MY
PEACEFUL GRAVE!

HE HEARS A GRISLY SOUND AND WHIRLS! THE BAGS
BURST OPEN AND THERE ARE THE OTHER TWO
CORPSES...

YIEEE--Y-YOU TWO!
TURNER AND D-DODGE!
BUT YOU'RE BOTH
DEAD TOO!

NOT TOO DEAD TO TEAR YOUR
CORPSE TO BITS,
SHRIGG! YOU
MURDERED MY
WIFE--AND
ME!

LOOKS LIKE
I GOT TO
FINISH THE
JOB I STARTED!



HEH-HEH! SO
YOU REALLY DID
HAVE A STONE
FOR A HEART!
HAH-HAH-HAH!

OW
WWW!

HEE-HEE! SURE
GLAD THEY DUG
ALL THREE
OF US
UP!

AND AFTER THE SCREAMING STOPPED
THERE WAS ONLY THE BLOOD RED MOON
AND THE SQUEAK OF BATS IN THE NIGHT
AND--PEALS OF HORRIBLE, HORRIBLE
LAUGHTER...



THE
END

VENGEANCE NIGHT

By JOHN MARTIN



LOU GRUNNO brought the car to a halt on a sidestreet, just out of view of old Barton's Wax Museum, and nodded to Nick Taten. Nick got out. Against his armpit he felt the cold bulk of steel.

"We'll give you ten minutes," Grunno said. "If Barton won't pay, we're coming in." He glanced back at the three men in the rear seat and grinned. "After he hears what happened to those two shops on Welsley Street, he'll give in."

Nick nodded, turned to go, his hard, cold face edged in the wind.

At high noon, the broken-down old neighborhood was forbidding enough. A relic of smaller, darker times, its once-fashionable streets wound bleakly and aimlessly without sense or direction. But, at night . . . Nick shuddered. Not even a gang leader would want to maintain a hideout here. True, the streets formed a kind of trap. But traps worked both ways. The area was too complicated for the simple mind of a mob. Nick had heard stories of strange things that went on behind some of these old brownstone fronts, things his simple brain could not understand. Here, he knew, a man could vanish, and not through the power of threats or guns or hard-faced, tight-lipped men like himself or Lou Grunno. Here, often, the police themselves hesitated to tread.

He turned the narrow corner and saw the stairs leading down to the large cellar that was Barton's Wax Museum. He crossed the street, under the dim, old street lamp and went downstairs, knocked on the door. The dull echo of the sound found another and a colder one in Nick's mind. It was not wood he was knocking on, but steel painted to look like wood. But what, he thought, would two old men like Barton and his curious old assistant, Karl Wendtner, be hiding behind steel?

A small slit opened in the door's middle. Two bright, old eyes stared out at him and he heard the rattle of bolts. Instantly, as the door moved back, Nick moved in. Barton, small, frail, breathless from the effort of shooting the heavy steel bolts, tottered against the wall. Behind him, stood the withered, smock-clad figure of Karl Wendtner.

"You could have come in without forcing your way in," Barton said drily. "We know who you are."

Taten glanced around warily. He had been here only once before, when Grunno had sent him to broach the subject of protection money. Each of the waxen exhibits of notorious criminals gleamed dully under a single hanging lamp. From a room beyond came the smell of molten wax and burning hair.

"Please, we are busy . . ." Barton began. "If you come from Grunno again . . ."

TATEN SAID NOTHING. His attention was riveted on one of the exhibits, the face of an axe murderer named Kampf. His blood chilled at the almost inhuman realism of the reproduction. When he tore his eyes away, Barton was smiling faintly.

"Pretty good," he said. "Isn't it, Mr. Taten?" He gestured behind him. "My assistant, Mr. Wendtner, is very clever. That is why we make so much money. That is why Mr. Grunno wants some of it."

Karl Wendtner cackled. He seemed to retreat a little further back into the darkness.

"You gonna pay?" Taten asked suddenly. "You know what happened to them two stores on Welsley Street?"

"We heard the news—on the radio," Mr. Barton said softly. "Still we will not pay."

"No, we will not pay," whispered Karl Wendtner. "Not if the skies crack."

Taten felt cautiously for the gun in his shoulder holster, glanced at his wristwatch. The ten minutes were almost up.

"Grunno ain't gonna like that," he said hoarsely. "Lou don't like to be crossed."

"I do not think that it matters in the least what Grunno thinks," Barton said. "Let me tell you something, Mr. Taten. For many years I starved. Then, from Europe, Mr. Wendtner came to me. Now he and I make money. Do you think I am going to allow someone else to take what has taken most of my life?" He shook his head. "No, we are safe here. Behind iron bars, iron doors . . ."

Swiftly, Nick Taten's hand shot back, fastened on the door knob. With an effort he pulled it open. Revealed in the opening were Lou Grunno and the three hoods, each grinning unpleasantly. They walked in, their hands reaching for guns. Then Taten shut the door behind them. He nobbed toward Barton and Wendtner.

Barton paled, shrank back a little. But Wendtner's hand came out of the darkness.

pressed firmly on Barton's.

"They won't pay," Nick Taten said, woodenly.

Grunno's thin red lips tightened into knife-edged lines. He stared around the dimly-lit cave of the museum curiously. Nick, looking at him, could see that even Grunno was affected by the eerie, inhuman atmosphere of utter, frozen realism. Grunno stared at the axe-murderer.

"Kampf!" Brunno muttered. "That coat he's got on—I could swear it was the one he was wearing when they grabbed him, blood-stains and all." His glance shifted from the waxen dummy to another, that of Little Augie Brent, who had once been his own rival for the overlordship of the whole area. Imitation blood spilled down the dummy's forehead from the hole the police bullet had made when the real Augie had been cut down, fighting his way out of a cop-trap, years before. An exclamation almost of fear came from between Grunno's lips. "And—and that Homburg hat Augie's wearin'. It—it looks just like the one I sent him once before—before we fell out and he tried crossin' me up."

"Yes, Mr. Wendtner insists on realism, Mr. Grunno," Barton said in a low voice. "These things are easy to obtain. A criminal's effects are often put up for auction after he is buried." Again a faint smile crossed his face. "Perhaps, one day, I shall have the pleasure of purchasing some of yours!"

LOU GRUNNO'S eyes blazed in anger. "All right!" he grated. "We warned you what would happen if . . ."

Snick!

The sudden shifting of the doorbolt into locked position made Grunno whirl. His eyes widened.

"Who did that?" he croaked, fingers tightening on his gun. Nick and the three other hoods stared fearfully.

"You are trapped, Mr. Grunno!" Barton exulted. "You could not leave now if you tried. Every door and window in this place is barred by steel. Now, I will call the police by phone!"

He turned. Then Grunno's gun blasted. Barton fell. Karl Wendtner's hand moved toward a switch on the wall. The gun blasted again. The old man staggered, slipped to the ground. Blood frothed from his mouth, but he was smiling weakly. Grunno stared.

"You—you will not get out!" Wendtner

gasped. He muttered something unintelligible, something like a summons, a cry for help.

"Through the back room!" Grunno grunted. "There must be a way out." He stepped over the prostrate bodies. "The old guy was nuts, if he thought even steel doors . . ." He started forward at a run, with the three hoods after him, only Nick Taten hesitating.

Abruptly, Grunno stopped, uttered a short, sharp cry of horror. Nick Taten's head snapped up. His blood froze at what he saw. From all sides the waxen figures on their pedestals were stirring, climbing down. Like robots, stiffly, converging in a circle, they advanced on Grunno, the hoods, on Nick Taten. The first of them reached the gang leader—the figure of Little Augie rent. The waxen fingers went 'round Grunno's neck, fastened in a grip of steel.

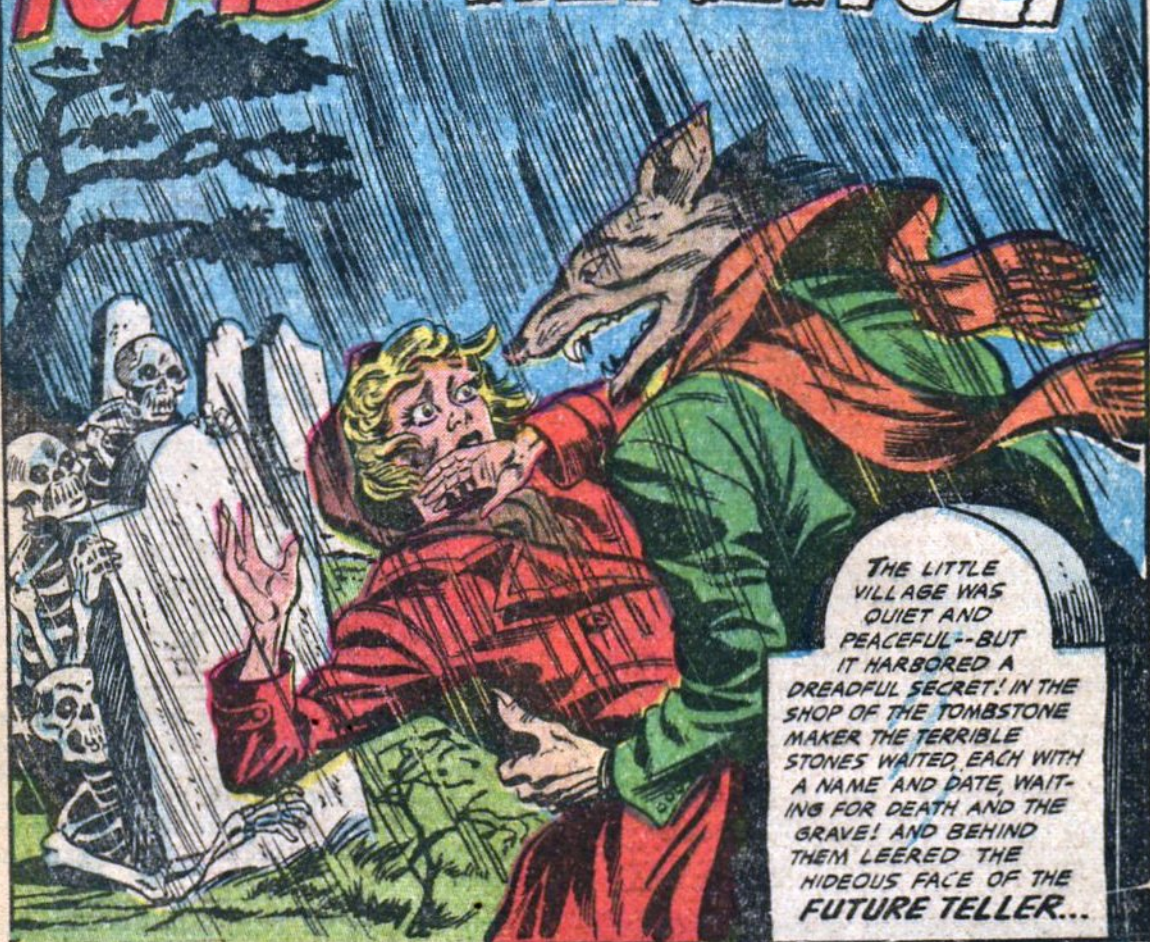
Nick still hesitated. The gun in his hand trembled, blasted. They were all firing now, madly, insanely, and screaming in terror. The steel-barred cellar shook with thunderous roars, until the bullets gave out and silence came. Still the wax dummies advanced. Grunno, held in the grip of two of them, was dragged toward the back room, the others being pulled along by the frozen-featured horrors. Nick Taten felt cold, icy, stiff fingers close 'round his neck, his arms. Paralyzed, dumb with horror, he realized now how Karl Wendtner had given the dummies their sheer realism, by some unholy, evil life that flowed into them from the pieces of clothing worn by their counterparts in real life.

And now, called back into life by the summons of their creator, they were answering Wendtner's dying, muttered command of vengeance.

Rigid in the powerful grip of the hideous dummies that held him, Nick Taten was dragged into the back room. Before him he saw a great cauldron of boiling, molten wax. Barton and Wendtner had been planning to use in creating new, waxen images. A terrible scream began, then strangled in muffled sobs of agony as Lou Grunno was tossed, writhing, head-first into the cauldron.

Nick Taten closed his eyes. It was the one act of mercy he knew he could perform for himself before he, too, followed Lou and the three hoods in a ghastly death.

TOMB for a WEREWOLF



YOUNG MARY ANDREWS, OUT LATE, COMES TO THAT DREADED SPOT, THE CEMETERY...

OH--I--I HATE THAT PLACE! B-BUT I HAVE TO PASS IT TO GET HOME!

So...

I--I'LL RUN AS FAST AS I CAN! IN A MINUTE OR TWO I'LL BE SAFELY HOME AND IN BED!



NO, MARY! YOU WILL NEVER REACH HOME...

EEEEEEE!

S-SOMETHING THERE
IN THE SHADOWS!
COMING
AFTER ME!



ARRRGGG!

OH--
HELP! A
W-WOLF!
AHHHH!

NOT A WOLF, MY DEAR!
A **WEREWOLF!** AND
I'VE BEEN WAITING A
LONG TIME
FOR YOU!

EEEEEEE!



HIS DEADLY WORK FINISHED, THE HORRIBLE
CREATURE VAULTS A FENCE AND DISAPPEARS
INTO THE NIGHT...

HEE-HEE! ANOTHER
VICTIM! AND RIGHT
ON SCHEDULE!



A FEW MINUTES LATER, AGAIN HIS NORMAL
SELF, PETER COOK ENTERS HIS SHOP IN THE
VILLAGE...

NO-NO! NO ONE
WILL EVER SUSPECT! THEY'LL
NEVER FIND ME OUT! BUT
NOW I MUST GET
TO WORK!



AND THE WORK...

HMMM--MARY
ANDREWS! BORN
1934--DIED (CHUCKLE)
1954! HER TOMBSTONE
WILL BE ALL READY WHEN
THEY (HAH-HAH) COME
TO ORDER IT
TOMORROW!





AND THAT NIGHT AS JOHN FOSS, SOMETHING OF A DRINKER, COMES HOME FROM THE LOCAL TAVERN...



D-DON'T LIKE TO PASS HERE AFTER WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT! BUT (HIC) WHO BELIEVES IN WEREWOLVES ANYWAY!

SUDDENLY HE FEELS THE CHILL BREATH OF DEATH ON HIS NECK...



ARRRRR!

YOWWW!
S-SOMETHING BEHIND ME!



YOUR TURN, JOHN FOSS! AND YOUR (CHUCKLE) TOMBSTONE IS WAITING!

YAAAAAAA!
NO!



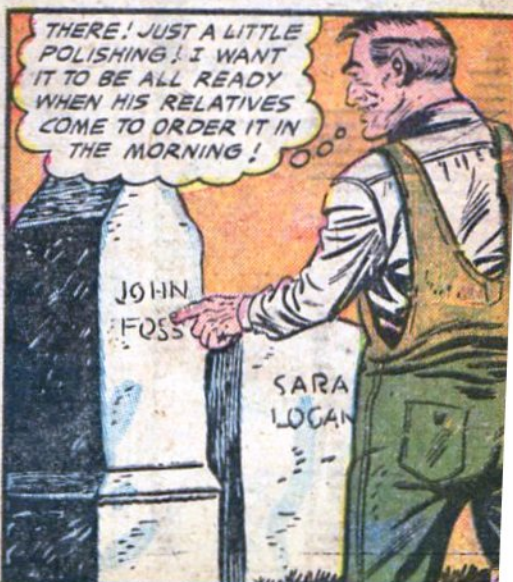
YES, JOHN FOSS!

HO-HO! SO EASY! BUT NOW TO GET BACK TO THE SHOP BEFORE ANY-ONE SEES ME!

AND THE SINISTER FIGURE OF PETER COOK SNEAKS BACK TO HIS HOUSE OF HORRORS...



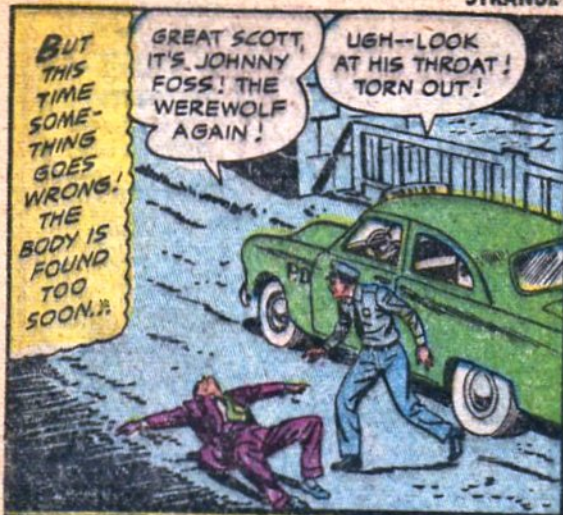
HEH-HEH! ONE BY ONE I'LL GET THEM! AT A NICE (CHUCKLE) PROFIT! BUT NOW TO TOUCH UP HIS TOMBSTONE A LITTLE!



THERE! JUST A LITTLE POLISHING! I WANT IT TO BE ALL READY WHEN HIS RELATIVES COME TO ORDER IT IN THE MORNING!

JOHN
FOSS

SARA
LOGAN



BUT THIS TIME SOMETHING GOES WRONG! THE BODY IS FOUND TOO SOON!!

GREAT SCOTT, IT'S JOHNNY FOSS! THE WEREWOLF AGAIN!

UGH--LOOK AT HIS THROAT! TORN OUT!



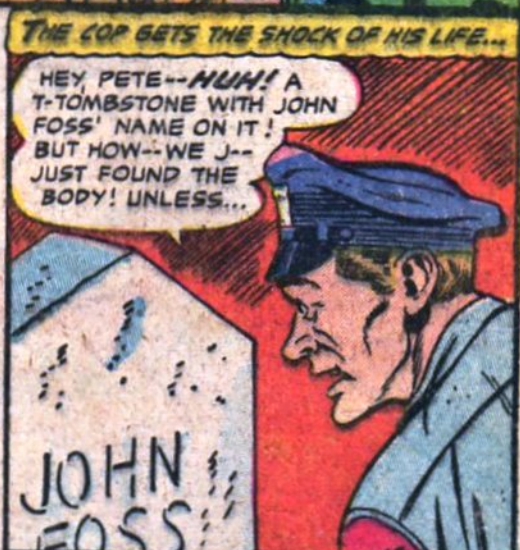
AND LATER...

WHILE MIKE IS PROWLING THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN I MIGHT AS WELL SEE IF PETE COOK IS AWAKE! I CAN SAVE HIS FOLKS THE TROUBLE OF ORDERING THE TOMBSTONE!



THE DOOR IS OPEN, BUT...

HMM--FUNNY! NOT A SIGN OF COOK ANYWHERE! BUT MAYBE HE'S IN THAT ROOM!



THE COP GETS THE SHOCK OF HIS LIFE...

HEY PETE--HUH! A T-TOMBSTONE WITH JOHN FOSS' NAME ON IT! BUT HOW--WE JUST FOUND THE BODY! UNLESS...



YOU KNOW TOO MUCH, MY FRIEND! DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU NOW?

YOW W! COOK! Y-YOU'RE THE WEREWOLF!



RIGHT! AND (HEH-HEH) THAT GUN WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD! YOU'LL NEVER GET TO USE IT!

YOU FIEND! YOU KILLED THEM ALL! AND EVEN HAD THEIR TOMBSTONES READY...



YOUR TOMBSTONE TOO, FOOL! THOUGH I'LL HAVE TO REALLY DO A RUSH JOB FOR YOU!



DESPERATE, PETER COOK AGAIN ASSUMES HIS FIENDISH SHAPE OF A WEREWOLF...

BUT THE WEREWOLF OVERLOOKS ONE FACT--A VIGILANTE BAND HAS BEEN ORGANIZED...

ALL RIGHT! YOU KNOW NOW! SO YOU DIE TOO! THE (CHUCKLE) TOMBSTONE BUSINESS IS REALLY PICKING UP TO-NIGHT!

YOWWW!



YAAA--A WHOLE BUNCH OF THEM! AND THEY'VE SEEN ME! I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!

YOU THERE, STOP!

IT'S THE WEREWOLF! GET HIM!



AND THE CHASE IS ON...

WE'LL
GET HIM
ALIVE!

YEAH, EVEN A
FIEND LIKE HIM
DESERVES
A TRIAL!

HEH-HEH! FOOLS!
I'LL NEVER LET
THEM TAKE ME
ALIVE! NEVER!



THE WOLF AT BAY IN HIS OWN SHOP...

I DEFY YOU ALL!
COME IN AND
GET ME -- IF
YOU DARE!



THEN
THE
COPS
AND
VIGILANTES
GET AN
IDEA...

WE DON'T WANT TO BURN
HIM ALIVE, JOE! WE'LL
HAVE TO
ANSWER TO
THE LAW IF
WE DO!

AH, DON'T
WORRY!
HE'LL COME OUT
FAST ENOUGH
WHEN HE
SMELLS THE
SMOKE!



BUT THERE THEY WERE WRONG...

HEE-HEE! TRY TO BURN
ME OUT, WILL YOU! BUT
YOU WON'T! I'LL DIE
IN HERE BEFORE I
COME OUT!
I'M NOT
AFRAID!



UNTIL FINALLY...

THERE SHE GOES!
FALLING! AND
THAT FOOL...

IT WAS
HIS CHOICE!
HE KNEW HE
WAS AS GOOD
AS DEAD
ANYWAY!

YAAAAA!



LATER, AMID THE SMOKING EMBERS,
THEY FIND THE CHARRED BODY OF
PETER COOK...

THERE HE IS,
OVER BY THAT
TOMBSTONE!

UGH! LOOK AT
HIM! BUT WAIT
A MINUTE--
THAT STONE...

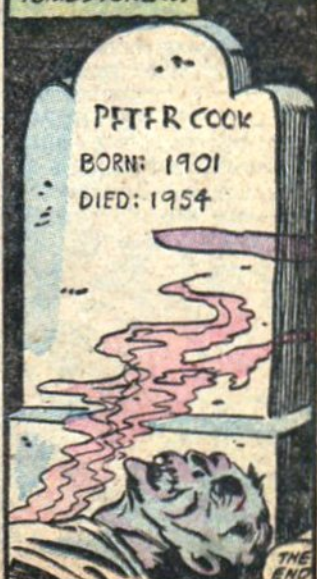


YES--PETER COOK HAD
EVEN CARVED HIS OWN
TOMBSTONE...

PETER COOK

BORN: 1901

DIED: 1954



THE
END

CALL FROM THE GRAVE

SHE WAS DEAD, MY BELOVED! YET SHE WALKED AND SPOKE TO ME! FROM THE GRAVE SHE CALLED TO ME: "COME, DARLING, COME TO ME!" HOW COULD I REFUSE HER? HOW COULD I LIVE WHEN SHE WAS DEAD? HOW COULD I HELP BUT VENTURE INTO DARKNESS...



IT ALL STARTED THE NIGHT CYNTHIA AND I DECIDED TO DRIVE TO MARYLAND AND GET MARRIED...

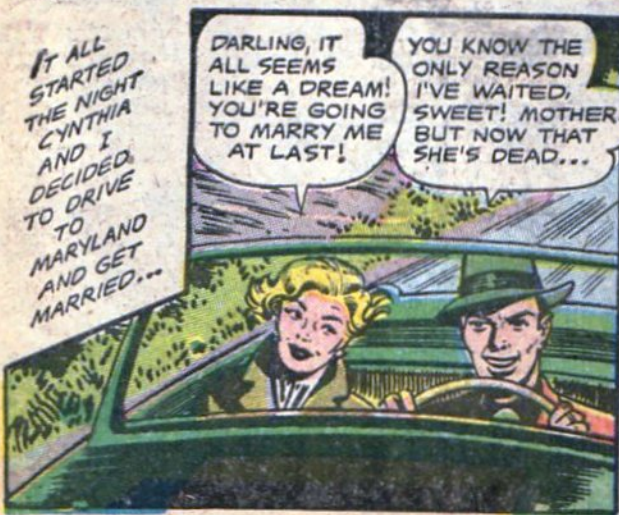
DARLING, IT ALL SEEMS LIKE A DREAM! YOU'RE GOING TO MARRY ME AT LAST!

YOU KNOW THE ONLY REASON I'VE WAITED, SWEET! MOTHER! BUT NOW THAT SHE'S DEAD...

I WAS IN A HURRY! I BARRELED THE CAR INTO THE CURVES...

PLEASE, HONEY! BE CAREFUL! THIS ROAD IS BAD!

DON'T WORRY! I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING! AND WE'VE GOT TO MAKE TIME!



WHEN IT HAPPENED, IT CAME FAST! WE SKIDDED— AND BEFORE I COULD WRENCH THE CAR OUT OF IT...

OH, BE CAREFUL!

EEEEEEEE—

I—I CAN'T STRAIGHTEN HER OUT!

WE TURNED OVER WITH A HORRIBLE, GRINDING CRASH! I WAS THROWN FREE...

AAAAAAAAAAAA—

YOWWWW— W—WE'LL BOTH BE KILLED!

I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I WAS OUT, BUT WHEN I FINALLY CAME BACK TO THE WORLD...

H-HUH? WHERE AM I?— OH, THE CRASH! AND— CYNTHIA! OH, MY HEAVENS, CYNTHIA...

CYNTHIA! OH, CYNTHIA, DARLING! ARE YOU— OH, NO— PLEASE NO!

CYNTHIA WAS DEAD! I PICKED HER UP, AND, DAZED AND BLINDED BY MY TEARS, STAGGERED DOWN THE ROAD! I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE I WAS GOING, AND I DIDN'T CARE...

I DON'T REMEMBER IT, BUT THE POLICE TOLD ME THEY FOUND ME HOLDING HER IN MY ARMS, SOBBING, TRYING TO TALK TO A DEAD BODY...

DARLING! MY POOR DEAD DARLING! I—I'VE KILLED YOU!

CYNTHIA! PLEASE, SWEETHEART, SAY THAT YOU FORGIVE ME!

THERE THEY ARE NOW! MUST BELONG TO THAT WRECK DOWN THE ROAD!

SOME MONTHS LATER THEY DISCHARGED ME FROM A SANITARIUM AS CURED! I'D HAD A ROUGH TIME OF IT...

YOU'RE SURE I'M OKAY NOW, DOCTOR? I STILL FEEL A LITTLE ROCKY!

YOU'RE ALL RIGHT PHYSICALLY, MR. DENTON! BUT TAKE IT EASY FOR A TIME, AND GET A LOT OF REST!



HMMM—LOTS OF REST! I'VE DONE NOTHING BUT REST FOR MONTHS! I'VE GOT TO GET TO WORK AND TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT—CYNTHIA!



BUT AT THE CORNER I HAD A TERRIBLE AND IRRESISTIBLE IMPULSE...

I MUST—I MUST! I'VE GOT TO KNOW THAT EVERYTHING WAS DONE PROPERLY!

TAXI! HERE, TAXI!



TAKE ME TO WOODLAWN CEMETERY, PLEASE! AND HURRY!

THE CEMETERY? OKAY, MISTER!



THE DRIVER WATCHED ME IN THE MIRROR! HE MUST HAVE SENSED THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG WITH ME...

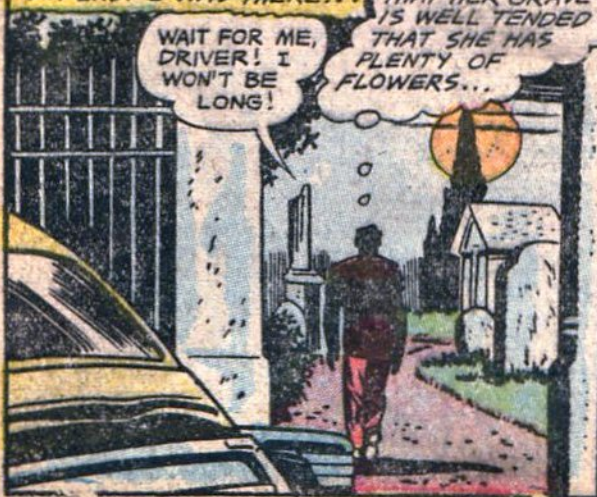
HURRY, MAN, HURRY! SHE'S WAITING FOR ME!



AT LAST I WAS THERE...

WAIT FOR ME, DRIVER! I WON'T BE LONG!

I MUST KNOW THAT HER GRAVE IS WELL TENDED—THAT SHE HAS PLENTY OF FLOWERS...



BUT AT THE SIGHT OF HER TOMBSTONE, MY HEAD BEGAN TO REEL! ALL THE GRIEF CAME BACK LIKE A TERRIBLE SICKNESS...

CYNTHIA! MY DARLING! LYING THERE IN THAT COLD EARTH! AND I—I DID IT! I—MURDERED HER...



THE NEXT THING I KNEW, A COP WAS SHAKING ME...

YA SEE, OFFICER!
LIKE I TOLD YA—
HE JUST PASSED
OUT ON THE
GRAVE!

YEAH! COME ALONG,
FELLA! WHERE
DO YOU LIVE?
I—I'LL BE
ALL RIGHT!



THE LABBY TOOK ME HOME...

THANKS, DRIVER!
I'LL BE OKAY NOW!
THANKS FOR
EVERYTHING!

SURE, MISTER,
GLAD TO DO IT!
BUT YOU
BETTER TAKE
IT EASY FOR
A SPELL!



BUT AS I ENTERED MY SMALL
APARTMENT, IT WAS THERE...

THAT ODOR! CYNTHIA'S
PERFUME! BUT HOW
ON EARTH...



I FELT THE HAIRS STIFFEN
ON THE BACK OF MY NECK...

THE ASH-TRAY!
CIGARETTES!
CYNTHIA'S BRAND—
AND MARKED WITH
HER LIPSTICK!



FRANTICALLY I BEGAN TO
SEARCH THE APARTMENT...

N-NOTHING! I'VE
LOOKED EVERYWHERE!
BUT CYNTHIA HAS BEEN
HERE! SOMEHOW I
KNOW THAT!



WHEN I RETURNED TO THE LIVING ROOM,
I GOT ANOTHER SURPRISE...

THAT NOTE ON
THE TABLE! IT—
IT WASN'T
THERE BEFORE!



THE NOTE WAS FROM MY DEAD CYNTHIA! IT SAID, SIMPLY: "COME TO ME SOON, MY LOVE!" THAT NIGHT I COULD NOT SLEEP...

IT'S INCREDIBLE! CYNTHIA IS DEAD — YET THAT PERFUME, THE CIGARETTES, AND THE NOTE...



SUDDENLY THERE SHE WAS...

CYNTHIA! DARLING, IT'S REALLY YOU! OH, CYNTHIA!

YES, MY DEAR! COME — KISS ME!



YOU'RE REALLY THERE? BUT HOW — WHY — I D-DON'T UNDERSTAND AT ALL!

NEVER MIND, DARLING! JUST COME TO ME — KISS ME!



B-BUT YOU — YOU'RE VANISHING! YOU'RE FADING AWAY — I CAN'T HOLD YOU!

I'M SORRY, DARLING! I CAN'T STAY LONG! BUT COME TO ME SOON — VERY SOON!



IN AN INSTANT SHE WAS GONE...

G — GONE! LIKE MIST, VANISHING! BUT SHE WAS THERE! I KNOW IT! SHE WAS REALLY THERE!



AS I REACHED MY APARTMENT, THE PHONE WAS RINGING...

NOW WHO COULD BE CALLING ME AT THIS HOUR OF THE NIGHT?



I RECOGNIZED CYNTHIA'S VOICE...

REMEMBER, MY LOVE! YOU MUST COME TO ME! HURRY — HURRY!

CYNTHIA! PLEASE, WAIT, DON'T HANG UP! DON'T LEAVE ME AGAIN, CYNTHIA!



THE NEXT NIGHT I WAITED, AND THE NEXT, AND THE NEXT! BUT THE PHONE WAS SILENT...

WHY DOESN'T SHE CALL ME AGAIN? WHY—WHY?

THEN ONE NIGHT...

THE PHONE — RINGING AT LAST! IT WILL BE CYNTHIA AGAIN! I KNOW IT MUST BE!

AND IT WAS...

CYNTHIA? I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, DARLING!

I HAVEN'T MUCH TIME, SWEETHEART! NOW LISTEN TO ME CAREFULLY...

YOU MUST COME TO THE CORNER OF GROVE AND CHRISTOPHER STREETS! COME AT ONCE! I'LL BE THERE! HURRY—HURRY!

I FOLLOWED HER INSTRUCTIONS! I RAN OUT INTO THE NIGHT...

THE CORNER OF GROVE AND CHRISTOPHER! SHE'LL BE WAITING FOR ME! MY CYNTHIA, SOMEHOW COME BACK FROM THE GRAVE!

BUT THERE WAS NOBODY THERE! THEN I SAW THE LIGHTS OF A CAR APPROACHING...

THAT CAR! SPEEDING! GOING MUCH TOO FAST! AND COMING RIGHT AT ME!

AT THE LAST MOMENT I RECOGNIZED THE WOMAN BEHIND THE WHEEL! CYNTHIA...

CYNTHIA! STOP—
W—WHAT ARE YOU
TRYING TO DO?
CYNTHIA—NO!



I MUST LEAVE AGAIN NOW! BUT
SURELY YOU
UNDERSTAND!

UNDERSTAND? BUT I
DON'T! WHAT DO YOU
WANT ME TO
DO, CYNTHIA?



IT WAS SHE, OF COURSE...

YES, DARLING? YES, I
UNDERSTAND WHAT
YOU WANT NOW! AND
I'LL DO IT AT ONCE!



THEN HURRY, MY
DARLING! COME
TO ME! YOU KNOW
HOW! I'LL BE
WAITING—THERE!
HURRY, MY BELOVED!



THE INSTINCT FOR LIFE MADE
ME LEAP TO ONE SIDE...

I'M SORRY,
DARLING! BUT
THIS SEEMED
THE ONLY
WAY!

Y—YOU
TRIED TO
KILL ME!



WHEN I REENTERED MY APARTMENT, THE
PHONE WAS RINGING AGAIN...

CYNTHIA AGAIN!
BUT NOW I—I
THINK I KNOW
WHAT SHE
WANTS!



I KNEW WHAT I HAD TO DO...

I—I'LL DO IT RIGHT
AWAY! I CAN GET A
CAR FROM THAT PLACE
DOWN THE STREET!
AT LAST—AT
LAST!



I HAD NO TROUBLE IN RENTING A CAR...

NOW I'M ALL SET! IN A FEW MINUTES I'LL BE SEEING CYNTHIA AGAIN!



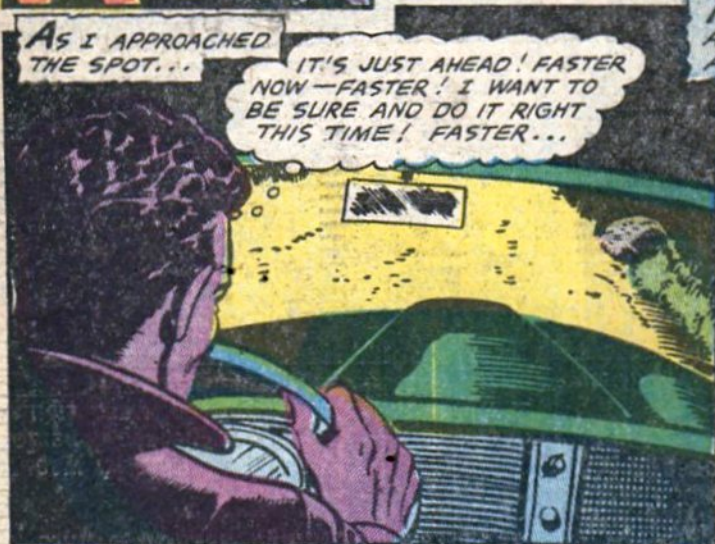
I DROVE OUT OF TOWN, TAKING THE SAME WINDING ROAD WE HAD TRAVELED THAT TERRIBLE NIGHT...

I MUST GO TO THE SAME SPOT! EXACTLY THE SAME PLACE!



AS I APPROACHED THE SPOT...

IT'S JUST AHEAD! FASTER NOW—FASTER! I WANT TO BE SURE AND DO IT RIGHT THIS TIME! FASTER...



IT WAS MADE EASY FOR ME! JUST AS I REACHED THE EXACT SPOT, A TIRE BLEW...



AND I WENT WHIRLING AND SPINNING INTO DARKNESS AND OBLIVION...

YOWWWWW—
D-DYING!



AND THEN IT WAS AS I HAD KNOWN IT MUST BE! CYNTHIA WAS THERE WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARMS—WAITING FOR ME...

HELLO, DARLING!
I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE AT LAST! SO VERY GLAD!

YES, CYNTHIA!
WE'LL NEVER PART AGAIN! NEVER-NEVER!



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